

FBI INFORMANTS

rev. March 2019

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This page shares information concerning FBI informants inside the Communist Party or inside other organizations (left wing and right-wing).

At its peak, the FBI stated it had 433 live informants inside the CPUSA. For details, see separate webpage on CPUSA: <https://sites.google.com/site/xrt013/cpusa1>

Howard O. Thompson, and his wife Lula Mae, infiltrated the Communist Party for the FBI in the Stockton, California area between 1948 and 1962 and 1953 and 1962 respectively. Howard's FBI symbol number was SF-1604-S.

FBI form FD-238 (copy below is Howard Thompson's form) was a checklist used by FBI field office Special Agents to verify that they performed due diligence with respect to (1) performing a background investigation of any person whom was being considered as an informant and (2) advising the informant of Bureau policies and procedures. The FBI Special Agent handling the informant indicated which file and which serial number(s) contained verification that proper procedures had been followed and required information had been obtained.

All FBI informants were initially on probationary status. Special Agents (and their Supervisors) were required to submit reports to FBI HQ which summarized information received and estimated the degree of reliability (expressed in percentage terms) of the informant's information. They also stated what use was made of information received.

When a field office wanted to pay an informant (for services and/or for expenses incurred), the case Agent's Supervisor (i.e. Special Agent in Charge aka SAC) sent FBI HQ a memo requesting authorization. Such authorizations were time-limited and had to be periodically renewed. All of the FBI informant files I have obtained have specified the total amount paid to the informant over the course of their relationship with the FBI.

For a sample of the type of memos which FBI field offices prepared for HQ, see my webpage concerning Rev. Delmar Dennis -- who infiltrated the most violent Klan in our nation, the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan of Mississippi: <https://sites.google.com/site/ernie124102/dennis>

The FBI informant files I have obtained normally total many hundreds or thousands of pages. Aside from the documents contained in the FBI file captioned with the informant's name, there also were instances when separate main files were created under the informant's symbol number. For example, our most important mole inside the CPUSA was Morris Childs. There were main files created under his name and also under his FBI symbol number (CG-5824-S*). In addition, there is a huge main file created for the counterintelligence program (SOLO) which was based upon the activities of Morris Childs. The "S" in his symbol number refers to "**security**" informant and the asterisk (*) after the "S" was used to designate those informants whose identity should never be revealed and who were not available for testifying in court or administrative hearings.

The FBI's "SOLO" file (125 sections) may be seen here: <http://vault.fbi.gov/solo>

FD-238 form on Howard O. Thompson:

A scan of an FD-238 form, which is a Confidential Source Record. The form is filled out with handwritten information. At the top, the name "Howard O. Thompson" is written. Below this, there are several sections with checkboxes and handwritten notes. The form is divided into two main columns, with the left column containing a list of questions and the right column containing the answers. The form is dated "11-15-50" and "11-15-51". The form is a standard FD-238 form used by the FBI to document confidential sources.

TYPES OF FBI INFORMANTS

CONFIDENTIAL SOURCE

Individuals who furnish the FBI information available to them through their employment or their position in the community. The FBI Manual of Instruction, circa 1975 cites as examples of confidential sources *"bankers, telephone company employees, and landlords."*

Confidential Source was established as a category in March 1950. The FBI Manual of Instructions (Section 107-T) provides instructions to field offices regarding procedures to follow. FBI HQ authorization was required to initiate contact with a CS involved with Communist or related investigations. In these instances, field offices were required to submit detailed background information to HQ regarding the source's date and place of birth, citizenship status, residence, employment, credit and criminal record and military service record (if any). In addition, a brief history of source's affiliation with CPUSA or other organizations and results of interview with him/her. Bureau clearance was not required for CS contacted in connection with criminal matters.

ESTABLISHED SOURCE

Any source with whom the FBI developed a relationship over time and who was trusted to keep relationship confidential. Usually a Confidential Source rather than a paid informant

OFFICE CONTACTS

Usually business people or others who could be relied upon to provide information. Each field office had a contact program whereby they would establish liaison with local groups and enterprises in their community. These were mostly goodwill efforts but did provide venues for the Bureau to talk about issues that might affect the group or its members, and to solicit their help in the form of confidential sources or panel sources.

PANEL SOURCE

Panel sources are defined as individuals who are not involved in an investigated group but who *"will attend its public gatherings on behalf of FBI for intelligence purposes or as potential witnesses."* Panel sources were first developed to meet the need for witnesses in the course of Smith Act trials of Communist Party members in the 1950s. In those trials, it was necessary to prove simple facts as to the existence of the Communist Party, the dates and places of public meetings held by the Party, and similar matters. To avoid surfacing and exposing regular FBI informants within the Party to establish such facts, panel sources were developed.

PRELIMINARY INQUIRY

Preliminary inquiries were conducted by FBI to obtain information about a person or organization by using mostly public sources (such as media coverage, library resources such as *Who's Who* directories) along with contacting FBI informants and established sources in order to determine if a formal investigation was warranted because of suspected criminal or subversive activities or any potential violations of federal laws. A preliminary inquiry often lasted only 1-3 months.

FBI SECURITY INFORMANT PROGRAM (FBI HQ FILE 66-2542 and 66-2542-3)

Sub-file 3 is the "control file" for HQ 66-2452 (the main file) on the FBI's Security Informant Program aka Confidential Informants. The control file is for instructions to field offices regarding policies and procedures to follow and for quarterly statistical reports.

HQ 66-2542 (entire file) = 746,750 pages

HQ 66-2542-3 (entire file) = 243,750 pages

Confidential National Defense Informants - DEFINITION:

"The first definition of a CNDI was enunciated in Bureau Bulletin #17, First Series of 1941, dated May 15, 1941, page 17 as follows:

'CNDI will be construed to mean those individuals who, because of previous or present affiliations or associations are in a position to furnish reliable information to the Bureau concerning any persons or organizations engaged in activities inimical to the national defense, etc'."

"This first definition of a national defense informant proved to be inadequate for the following reasons:

1. Agents failed to distinguish between a cooperative individual and an informant.
2. There were too many alleged informants 'in a position' to furnish information who never did so."

"Inspectors' Comments: Time and again, in practically every field office, inspectors had the same criticism to make of the CNDI file; namely—it contained the names of a multitude of individuals who were not, by

the farthest stretch of the imagination, informants.” [HQ 66-2542-3, #205, 2/27/43, G.C. Callan to D. Milton Ladd re: Confidential National Defense Informants.]

The Bureau wanted to distinguish between persons “*in a position*” to provide information versus those persons who actually DID provide such information on a regular basis. For example, in one office there were a total of 75 cards in the CNDI file but only 15 were actual informants. The others were considered “***sources of information***”.

Page 5 of this Callan memo reports that the FBI had “*over 30,000 plant informants*”.

July 10, 1943

The Quarterly Report for period ending 6/20/43 stated that the FBI had a total of 4914 CNDI informants broken down as follows:

- German activities = 596
- Italian activities = 369
- Communist activities = 1030 (7 black)
- Japanese activities = 229
- Other nationalities = 425
- General Un-American Activities = 2265

Of this 4914 total, 337 were “*informants of the colored race.*”

“***General Un-American***” included: Silver Shirts, Christian Front, KKK, Technocracy Inc.

COMMUNIST INFORMANTS BY FIELD OFFICE (number parenthesis are African-Americans) [HQ 66-2542-3, #210X1 (section 4, pages 116-120)]

Albany= 29 (2)
Atlanta = 21
Baltimore = 20
Birmingham = 10 (3)
Boston = 40
Buffalo = 26 (6)
Butte = 8
Charlotte = 13
Chicago = 16
Cincinnati = 13
Cleveland = 30
Dallas = 10 (2)
Denver = 9
Des Moines = 11
Detroit = 17
El Paso = 13

Grand Rapids = 37 (2)
Honolulu = 9
Houston = 33
Huntington = 13
Indianapolis = 34
Jackson = 0
Juneau = 6
Kansas City = 25
Knoxville = 9
Little Rock = 4
Los Angeles = 110
Louisville = 6
Memphis = 4
Miami = 19 (2)
Milwaukee = 14
Newark = 20
New Haven = 27
New Orleans = 8
New York = 14
Norfolk = 3
Oklahoma City = 13
Omaha = 13
Philadelphia = 34 (3)
Phoenix = 6
Pittsburgh = 20
Portland = 20
Providence = 18
Richmond = 6
St. Louis = 15
St. Paul = 15 (2)
Salt Lake City = 4
San Antonio = 6
San Diego = 10
San Francisco = 50 (6)
San Juan = 12
Savannah = 18 (11)
Seattle = 42
Sioux Falls = 20
Springfield = 14 (2)
WDC = 13 (7)

May 7, 1945

G.C. Callan to Alex Rosen memo discusses difference between general investigative and CNDI informants and proposed instructions to field offices giving SACs authority to approve 20% increases in monthly payments to all regularly paid informants without Bureau approval.

Investigative informant payments are C.O.D. payments “after the information has been obtained and verified” due to “personal habits as itinerants and the general unreliability of the type of person who can furnish information regarding criminal matters. In most instances, a general investigative informant can furnish information regarding a particular crime but after that he has no further information of value and

may not have any for a considerable period of time and, therefore, general investigative informants should continue to be dealt with on a C.O.D. basis.”

“It is different with a national defense informant for from them we are obtaining information of a general intelligence nature which may not be a violation of a Federal law but which we must follow and the activity he is reporting on is usually of a continuous nature.” [HQ 66-2542-3, #316, 5/7/45 Callan to Rosen, “*Payments to Confidential Informants*”, page 1]

Page 2 of same memo reports that:

“Excluding our double agents, of which there are eight presently operating, only five out of 314 regularly paid informants are presently receiving amounts exceeding [amount redacted] per month. Three of these are translators, one handling Japanese matters and the other two are used as consultants on German organizations and to analyze German material and propaganda in addition to their translation work.” ...

“At the present time a great majority of our regularly paid informants are reporting on Communist matters. In determining the amount to be paid to such individuals, their character and background must continually be kept in mind. An individual who is willing to associate with members of the Communist Political Association, report on the activities of this organization and the individuals connected with it is in most instances not a particularly high type of person and has never had very much money. Today most of our informants have other employment from which they obtain a regular salary and the amounts we pay them are supplemental to their regular income. It has been the experience of the supervisor who has handled the informant desk for over three years that when an individual of this type gets too much extra money he becomes lazy, fails to cover and report on all activities, and may soon even discontinue his services as an informant because he no longer needs additional money or we have to discontinue his services because he is no longer productive.”

July 3, 1945

J.C. Strickland to D. Milton Ladd re: Communist Political Association reports that: “**The Bureau’s records reflect 1491 confidential national defense informants who are stated by the field to be reporting exclusively on Communist matters. These records also reflect that there are only 274 paid confidential informants on Communist matters. It must be remembered that the CNDI reports on a purely voluntary basis.**” [HQ 66-2542-3, #317 (section 5, pages 179-181)]

July 9, 1945

As of June 1945, the FBI had a total of 3263 informants. Of that number, 1414 reported on Communist activities and 1021 reported on “**general un-American activities**”. A total of 474 of the 3263 informants were black. A specific breakdown by field office location is attached to this memo. [HQ 66-2542-3, #314, 7/9/45 memo from Alex Rosen to J. Edgar Hoover.]

Atlanta = 9 (3)
Baltimore = 46 (10)
Birmingham = 17 (7)
Charlotte = 8
Boston = 32 (7)
Chicago = 137 (8)

Cleveland = 42 (8)
Dallas = 12 (1)
Denver = 5
Detroit = 40 (13)
Houston = 14 (1)
Indianapolis = 33
Little Rock = 5
Los Angeles = 117 (12)
Milwaukee = 14 (6)
Newark = 42 (9)
New Orleans = 6 (2)
New York City = 82
Philadelphia = 42 (5)
Phoenix = 8
Pittsburgh = 20
Richmond = 16 (10)
St. Louis = 20 (2)
Salt Lake City = 6
San Diego = 11
Seattle = 34 (3)
WDC = 20 (6)

July 7, 1945

Asst Director D. Milton Ladd to Hoover reports that “we presently have 268 paid informants on Communists and we are paying them an average of a little over [amount redacted] per month for the information and assistance they are rendering to the Bureau. In reviewing these informants it is noted that 217 of them are members of the Communist Political Association, many of them holding official positions with their particularly branch of the Association. 9 of them are members of the American Youth For Democracy, the successor organization to the Young Communist League which is a front organization for the CPA. 13 of these informants are furnishing us with trash material from CPA or AYD headquarters. These latter informants are paid very small amounts but the information we receive from them has been very valuable and of great assistance to the Bureau in following the activities of these organizations as it is usually in written form.” ...[HQ 66-2542-3, #313, 7/7/45. D.M. Ladd to J. Edgar Hoover]

HQ 66-2542-3, section 6 of file:

FBI CONFIDENTIAL INFORMANT LIST

“It was pointed out to the Conference that at the present time those informants who are hired on a continuous basis over a long period of time are listed in the Confidential Informants’ index maintained in the Security Division and are included in the tabulation prepared monthly reflecting payments made to regular confidential informants each month. There are instances where informants for one, two or three months are not reflected on this list because they are not considered as continuing informants. There are also informants who are paid on a c.o.d. basis who are not included in the ‘Paid Confidential Informant List’. This latter type of informant is one who is paid for a bit of spot information he may furnish us at any time and is not regularly considered as a continuing informant. For instance, a member of the underworld may furnish us information concerning the location of a wanted fugitive, is paid on a c.o.d. basis and his services would not be utilized again until he could furnish further information which the Bureau is particularly desirous of securing. The Conference in considering who should and who should not be considered as a continuing confidential informant, unanimously recommends that in every instance where an informant is paid on a predetermined rate, whether it be weekly, semi-monthly, or monthly, regardless of the length of time he is to be continued as an informant, that he be considered as a continuing informant; that all be included in our Confidential Informants’ index; and that they also

be included on the monthly report of payments made to confidential informants. The only individuals who will not be considered as continuing confidential informants are those who are paid on a c.o.d. basis for spot information of importance." [Clyde Tolson for Executive Conference to Director, 11/26/48 memo, HQ 66-2542-3, #432 which is in section 6 of file, page 90.]

SYMBOL NUMBERS

"The Bureau does not desire that all informants be given symbol numbers regardless of how frequently they may be utilized. A permanent symbol number should be furnished to any informant, either National Defense or general investigative, who has been found to be reliable and can and does provide information with sufficient regularity. By giving an individual of this type a permanent symbol number and advising the Bureau of such designation, this number can be used in reports without the necessity of attaching an informant sheet...With regard to informants on Communist matters, instructions have been issued that before a direct contact can be made with a prospective informant on Communism, authority must be obtained from the Bureau. When the name of a prospective informant is submitted to the Bureau with certain background data it is searched against the Bureau files and either authority is given to contact the individual directly or, in the event derogatory information is revealed, the field is advised to make no contact. After the individual who is a possible informant on Communism is contacted and agrees to provide information, he should thereafter be considered as any other confidential informant; that is, maintained without a symbol number if he is only contacted from time to time or furnished a symbol number if he is used with sufficient regularity to justify a symbol." [J. Edgar Hoover to SAC Savannah, 3/18/47,; HQ 66-2542-3, #359 which is section 6 of file page 71]

NUMBER OF INFORMANTS and PAID vs UNPAID

"I wish to advise that at the present time the Bureau maintains 249 regularly paid confidential informants on Communist matters. These informants report information not only on the Communist Party but on the extremely radical Socialist Workers Party, the Workers Party, and on various Communist dominated or infiltrated groups....With regard to the total number of Communist informants, the last report from the field, December 1946, lists 1017 informants, both paid and unpaid, on Communist matters. The paid informants are those individuals receiving more than \$10.00 per month on a regular basis and are closely supervised, both in the field and at the Seat of Government, to be certain they produce information commensurate with the money which they are paid. These informants range from rank and file members to local unit secretaries, treasurers, organizers, state officers, and also individuals who because of their positions provide trash coverage on numerous Party headquarters in the country, The work of these informants is regularly evaluated and they are urged to keep advancing as much as possible within the Party to increase their value as informants...The New York Field Division which, of course, is the center of the Communist activity, is completing arrangements whereby we will have trash coverage not only the Communist Party headquarters in New York but also on the headquarters of the International Workers Order." [Assistant Director D. Milton Ladd to J. Edgar Hoover, 2/14/47; HQ 66-2542-3, #354 which is section 6, page 67]

AFRICAN-AMERICAN INFORMANTS

"There are fifty male and ten female negro informants who are paid more than \$10 per month on a regular basis. In addition, there are 374 male and 36 female informants who are either unpaid or paid on a c.o.d. basis. The grand total is 424 male negro informants and 46 female negro informants." [J.P. Coyne to Assistant Director D. Milton Ladd, 8/13/47; HQ 66-2542-3, #368X which is section 6, page 82.]

USE OF T-SYMBOLS

"It is self-evident that the indiscriminate use of T informants decreases the value of the reports and greatly augments the responsibilities of those charged with weighing and evaluating information contained therein. It is therefore desired that the use of T informants be restricted to the following classes of information:

- a. Sensitive government agencies. These include Army, Navy, Air, Central Intelligence, State Department, and the Civil Service Commission

b. Established Bureau informants whose identity must be protected

c. Persons interviewed who specifically request anonymity.”

[Bureau Bulletin #41, Series 1949, 8/18/49; HQ 66-2542-3, no serial number, which is in section 7, page 122; original copy filed in HQ 66-03-1003]